

## BECAUSE YOU PRAYED

Intro: We begin a brief series called A Sober Spirit of Prayer, based on the verse in 1 Peter 4:7, *Be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer*. We will look at three stories about King Hezekiah in Isaiah 37-39, today's story titled, Because You Prayed. We will look at the Problem facing King Hezekiah, his Prayer, and the Prophecy by which God answered that prayer. By way of preliminary application, I assume that every one of us at times faces problems way beyond our ability to resolve, that we too pray, and that the Lord does answer. My hope is that, not only will be encouraged more to "take it to the Lord in prayer," but that we will learn from Hezekiah to pray better.

### Problem: What was the crisis that drove Hezekiah to pray?

1. The Assyrian Threat (36:1-2): A distinction between regular and crisis prayer (Worship, Thanks, Daily / Crisis)
  - a. Hezekiah had instated reforms and re-established worship and feasts.
  - b. "Destruction of Sennacherib," Lord Byron, 1815: A brutal force devastating Israel.
2. Assyria the ascendant power, capturing Israel in 722 b.c.
  - a. Rabshakeh taunts to demoralize: *Don't let H. deceive you into trusting in the Lord!* [46 cities fallen]
  - b. *Look at all the gods (sic) we've defeated; how can your God deliver you?*
3. Desperate times—counter-measures taken (fortified walls, water supply, forts, treaties) and failed, and there were no desperate responses left: *This is a day of distress, rebuke, and rejection; for children have come to birth, and there is no strength to deliver* (37:3).

### Prayer: How did Hezekiah respond in the crisis?

1. First Prayer (1-7) Grief and acknowledgment of need. Tore clothes, admitting shame and inability.
  - a. Imagine leaders of today expressing such grief and humility at onslaught of enemy.
  - b. How do we respond to devastation of church, country, and world?
  - c. Turned to the Lord—this may not be as "obvious" as you think. Not a "foxhole" response, but pattern.
  - d. Called on the Lord's prophet, Isaiah. What does God say about our situation? (6-7)
2. Second Prayer (14-20) Receiving the threatening letter, bold faith. [Takes letter, goes to temple and himself prays]
  - a. Addressed the LORD as Sovereign: Enthroned (exalted), King (all kingdoms), Creator (all) (16)
  - b. Recognized reproach of Sennacherib as "reproach against the living God." (17)
    - i. Not "all about me and my problems," but about God's holiness and glory.
    - ii. Reproach of God's people, injustice, all sin an attack on the holiness of God.
  - c. Supplication: (20)
    - i. *Deliver us from his hand* –Specific request
    - ii. *that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that You alone, LORD, are God.*—Purpose

### Prophecy: How did the Lord answer Hezekiah's prayer?

1. *Because you prayed ... this is the word that the Lord has spoken against [Sennacherib] ...* 21f. God answered first with a prophecy revealing His larger purpose. (Revelation, the Word)
2. God "owns" the suffering and reproach of His people. (23) *Against Whom ...?*
  - a. "And the reproaches of those who reproach You have fallen on me" (Ps. 69:9).
  - b. Assurance that "this is my fight." >Cross
3. God works a miracle (36ff.)
  - a. 185,000 struck dead in the night; Sennacherib goes away and killed in a coup.
  - b. Foreshadowing of Resurrection: eternal life.

Conclusion: Because you prayed! What does this true story make you want to do? Prophecy (Word announced) of God's salvation plan, His love for you, the miracle of His power to deliver. What if not pray? If desperate, you will pray and He will answer.

## **The Destruction of Sennacherib**

BY LORD BYRON (GEORGE GORDON)

The Assyrian came down like the wolf on the fold,  
And his cohorts were gleaming in purple and gold;  
And the sheen of their spears was like stars on the sea,  
When the blue wave rolls nightly on deep Galilee.

Like the leaves of the forest when Summer is green,  
That host with their banners at sunset were seen:  
Like the leaves of the forest when Autumn hath blown,  
That host on the morrow lay withered and strown.

For the Angel of Death spread his wings on the blast,  
And breathed in the face of the foe as he passed;  
And the eyes of the sleepers waxed deadly and chill,  
And their hearts but once heaved, and for ever grew still!

And there lay the steed with his nostril all wide,  
But through it there rolled not the breath of his pride;  
And the foam of his gasping lay white on the turf,  
And cold as the spray of the rock-beating surf.

And there lay the rider distorted and pale,  
With the dew on his brow, and the rust on his mail:  
And the tents were all silent, the banners alone,  
The lances unlifted, the trumpet unblown.

And the widows of Ashur are loud in their wail,  
And the idols are broke in the temple of Baal;  
And the might of the Gentile, unsmote by the sword,  
Hath melted like snow in the glance of the Lord!